

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA  
ROANOKE DIVISION**

**KEVIN DOTSON,**  
**Plaintiff,**

**v.**

**REECE H. ROBERTSON,**  
**Defendant.**

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**Civil Action No. 7:12-cv-00395**

**MEMORANDUM OPINION**

**By: Hon. Michael F. Urbanski**  
**United States District Judge**

Kevin Dotson, a Virginia inmate proceeding pro se, filed a civil rights action pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983 with jurisdiction vested in 28 U.S.C. § 1343. Plaintiff names Reece H. Robertson, an Assistant Commonwealth Attorney for Russell County, Virginia, as the sole defendant. Plaintiff simply alleges in the rambling Complaint that he suffers from a mental defect, he was unjustly convicted of aggravated malicious wounding and abduction by force, and defendant broke “some law” in plaintiff’s case.

The court must dismiss any action or claim filed by an inmate if the court determines that the action or claim is frivolous or fails to state a claim on which relief may be granted. See 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2), 1915A(b)(1); 42 U.S.C. § 1997e(c). The first standard includes claims based upon “an indisputably meritless legal theory,” “claims of infringement of a legal interest which clearly does not exist,” or claims where the “factual contentions are clearly baseless.” Neitzke v. Williams, 490 U.S. 319, 327 (1989). The second standard is the familiar standard for a motion to dismiss under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6), accepting a plaintiff’s factual allegations as true. A complaint needs “a short and plain statement of the claim showing that the pleader is entitled to relief” and sufficient “[f]actual allegations . . . to raise a right to relief above the speculative level . . . .” Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 555 (2007) (internal quotation marks omitted). A plaintiff’s basis for relief “requires more than labels and

conclusions . . . .” Id. Therefore, a plaintiff must “allege facts sufficient to state all the elements of [the] claim.”<sup>1</sup> Bass v. E.I. Dupont de Nemours & Co., 324 F.3d 761, 765 (4th Cir. 2003).

To state a claim under § 1983, a plaintiff must allege “the violation of a right secured by the Constitution and laws of the United States, and must show that the alleged deprivation was committed by a person acting under color of state law.” West v. Atkins, 487 U.S. 42, 48 (1988). However, plaintiff fails to allege how defendant violated a federal right. To the extent plaintiff challenges his convictions or sentence and requests speedier release from custody, his sole remedy in federal court is a properly filed petition for a writ of habeas corpus, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 2254. See Edwards v. Balisok, 520 U.S. 641, 645-47 (1997) (stating that a § 1983 damages claim arguing that due process rights violations resulted in loss of good-time credits should be brought as habeas corpus petition); Preiser v. Rodriguez, 411 U.S. 475, 500 (1973) (stating that a writ of habeas corpus is sole federal remedy when inmate challenges fact or duration of imprisonment and relief sought is finding that the inmate is entitled to a speedier release). Plaintiff cannot recover damages in a § 1983 civil rights claim for an allegedly unconstitutional conviction without first having that conviction reversed, expunged, or called into question by a writ of habeas corpus. Heck v. Humphrey, 512 U.S. 477, 486-87 (1994). Therefore, plaintiff fails to state a claim against defendant upon which relief may be granted, and he may not proceed via § 1983 to recover legal or equitable relief that calls into question the

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<sup>1</sup> Determining whether a complaint states a plausible claim for relief is “a context-specific task that requires the reviewing court to draw on its judicial experience and common sense.” Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662, 678-79 (2009). Thus, a court screening a complaint under Rule 12(b)(6) can identify pleadings that are not entitled to an assumption of truth because they consist of no more than labels and conclusions. Id. Although the court liberally construes pro se complaints, Haines v. Kerner, 404 U.S. 519, 520-21 (1972), the court does not act as an inmate’s advocate, sua sponte developing statutory and constitutional claims not clearly raised in a complaint. See Brock v. Carroll, 107 F.3d 241, 243 (4th Cir. 1997) (Luttig, J., concurring); Beaudett v. City of Hampton, 775 F.2d 1274, 1278 (4th Cir. 1985). See also Gordon v. Leeke, 574 F.2d 1147, 1151 (4th Cir. 1978) (recognizing that a district court is not expected to assume the role of advocate for a pro se plaintiff).

legality of his state court convictions. Accordingly, the court dismisses the Complaint without prejudice for failing to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915A(b)(1).

The Clerk is directed to send copies of this Memorandum Opinion and the accompanying Order to plaintiff.

Entered: October 15, 2012

*/s/ Michael F. Urbanski*

Michael F. Urbanski  
United States District Judge